10: d'Orleans--321 [4] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 554, 793

"Then come the bonzes, one of whom, a big, fat man, with a bosom as protuberant as that of a woman, is a very important personage, as his small violet petticoat indicates. Satouk Camdi, as he is called, has a frank, cheerful face and strong voice, which he makes ample use of to ply us with questions. Once settled down, with his porters who carry sunshade, fan, &c., it seems as if we should never get rid of him. My proposal to photograph him is very gleefully accepted, and he at once makes his brother and sister sit for their portraits as well."

10: d'Orleans--379 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 554, 609

"The natives here seem very peaceful, and we get on very well with them. We are looked upon as important personages, or we should not be admitted into the sala where we pass the night and which bears the following inscription:--'Reserved for great men and mandarins.'"

23: Franck--312-313 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 554, 634

"... His Majesty was about to confer upon me his most regal decoration, the most prominent of the many medals on the breasts of the commissaire and of [313] the king himself, both in bronze and in the flesh, the highest honor of which this protected Oriental potentate is capable, something corresponding in Luang Prabang to the order of the Rising Sun in Japan, to wit: the order of the Million Elephants and the White Parasol! For you must know that Luang Prabang is not only the Kingdom of the Divine Buddha but even more officially the Kingdom of the Million Elephants and the White Parasol, just as King Sisavang Vong Somdet Prah's real title is Master of Heaven and of Life. I do not know whether it is actually claimed that there are so many pachyderms in the kingdom at the same time, but a little exaggeration is always admissible in the tropics; or it may be that the souls of departed elephants are also included in the reckoning."

23: Franck--338-339 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 554, 482

" For in Laos the importance of a traveler depends upon the amount of baggage he carries, the amount of trouble he puts the country to in getting him through it, even as in many other lands. The king never travels without an enormous retinue and tons of baggage, whether he needs it or not, and if he gets separated from it he withdraws into incognito. One [339] reason the coolies of Laos cannot carry more is that each of them has a musette containing his personal belongings and food, a knife in a wooden scabbard, and increasing odds and ends, until by this time they had nearly as much baggage as we, in sharp contrast to the Chinese, who, in a land of strong and constant competition, carry almost nothing of their own. On this third afternoon two men carried nothing but the loads of the others, and they seemed to be getting weaker as their own loads grew ever bigger. If this kept up I should have to have two men for every one who was actually carrying for me and my escort. "

565 The common people, kind and carefree in character, roamed
175° over the country in all directions as easy-going masters, leaving
/462/ household tasks to the women and the work of the fields to dependents of an inferior race or to slaves. They were excellent boatmen and traders rather than farmers, so that they liked to perform the function of peddlers and served as a link between the multiple /55/ varieties of mankind which inhabited Lan-Xang.

567 Slavery existed--slaves could be obtained through capture, as
175° the result of debt or through trade--and brought high profits to those
563 who engaged in this traffic. In the region of Muong-Swa there was also a kind of serfdom which was applied to certain Kha tribes placed under the patronage of the king, the princes or the chief representatives of the nobility.

565 But if we consider the gentle and happy temperament of this
175° people whose good humor made up for everything, we are justified in believing that the relations between the various social levels must have been free of any harshness.

191 They spoke a dialect derived from the language which was imported into the basin of the Ménam by Rama Khamheng at the end of the thirteenth century and which was itself derived from the
771 graphs of India (1). They practiced orthodox Buddhism together
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1. Cf. Mission Pavie, op. cit. /Études diverses, Vol. II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam"/ Inscription of Sukhothaï translated by Father Schmitt, p. 192: "It was in (1287 A. D.) that the king Rama-Khameng summoned a teacher who created Thaï writing."

with the cult of the "Phi" or Genii which represented for them the beneficent or maleficent forces of Nature. The bonzes were of comparatively pure morals amidst these peoples for whom enjoyment and pleasure were, when /56/ all is considered, the true gods. Although they were fairly ignorant and recited their prayers in Pali
/782/ without understanding them, they did not lack a certain air of nobility. They also enjoyed a high regard and had as much favor as they could desire. The bonzeries[1] which were built near the pagodas were at once places of inviolable asylum, schools frequented by all the children of the village, and workshops where trades could be learned.

/[1] Buddhist monasteries--Analyst./

coming down the great river, and in the following he repressed with no less vigor a new attempt on the part of this ambitious prince." We have been unable to find any confirmation of this expedition in the Laotian chronicles. 643* 648* 175*

General Sene-Soulintha took command /91/ of the troops and brought them back to the capital, where he had difficulty in explaining the king's disappearance. Since the ministers and the queen, who had just brought a son named Nokeo-Koumane into the world, affected not to believe him, he had the palace surrounded and the prime minister Tian-Ta-Simmarath, the governor of Vientiane, assassinated together with his partisans and proclaimed himself regent (1). 643* 669 175*

1. The Annals state that the chief bonzes preached conciliation and succeeded in avoiding the conflict for three months.

SENE-SOULINTHA (1511), REGENT (1571-1575).

Nothing could have been more favorable to the plans of the king of Burma than the disappearance of Setthathirath, and especially these court quarrels which he resolved to exploit without delay. To the highly questionable regent he opposed the rights to the crown of the former Oupahat, whom he had kept at Ava as a hostage since 1565. But his envoys were ignominiously massacred, "a fact which shows to what a degree people in Lan-Xang still thought they could scorn the Burmese provocations." In order to avenge this outrage Bureng-Naung sent out an expedition which was weakly /92/ led by contingents from Xieng-Mai and even from Siam, and which ended in complete failure. Then he multiplied his intrigues and worked behind discontented persons who naively imagined that with their old Oupahat there would no longer be anything to fear from Burma. 643* 648* 175* /726/

In spite of the opposition which he encountered, the regent held his power in Vientiane for four years. Sixty-one years old, he was the son of a simple village chieftain whom King Phothisarath had singled out for his intelligence and bravery. Setthathirath had employed his skill in Xieng-Mai, where he had proved his military talent against the Burmese and the pretenders to the throne of Lan-Na. Promoted to the rank of general and governor of Muong-Sai, 643* 554 175*

643• he had subsequently taken an active part in all the expeditions. In
554 the present circumstances he therefore seemed to be the man for the
175• job, but his obscure origin constituted an insurmountable obstacle to his recognition as head of the government by the immense majority of the population, who were unswervingly attached to their dynasty.

643• Third Burmese invasion (1574-1575). He tried to break the opposi-
648• tion by a reign of terror and had many rebels pitilessly executed on
175• /93/ his own authority. Then Bureng-Naung, exasperated, went on the march towards the autumn of 1574, and the Burmese army reappeared under the walls of the capital of Lan-Xang for the third time in less than a dozen years.

726 Sene-Soulintha thought that he should adopt the tactics which had
643• succeeded so well for Setthathirath, and tried to draw the enemy into
648• the forest. But the situation was no longer the same as it was in the
175• time when all the Laotians stood behind their legitimate sovereign. He took only a few partisans with him in his flight and Bureng-Naung was careful not to pursue him. The Burmese king entered the stronghold without difficulty, placed his protege on the throne, put a garrison at his disposition, consolidated the ramparts and returned tranquilly to Ava with the young Nokeo-Koumane whom he took along as a hostage. There he soon learned that the regent had fallen into the power of the Oupahat, who was sending him to him with all haste. Bureng-Naung received him with distinction and allowed him to live in complete liberty (1).

1. Cf. Lefevre-Pontalis, op. cit. /"La lutte des Thaïs contre les Birmans au seizième siècle." Revue indochinoise, 1914, Vol. XXII, Nos. 7-8./

MAHA-OUPAHAT, KING 1575-1579.

648• Lan-Xang was finally subject to the law of the /94/ Burmese con-
175• queror (1). After the Shan States, after Lan-Na and Ayutha, it
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/651/ 1. The tribute of vassaldom was ten elephants and twelve kilograms of gold each year. (Ibid.)

succumbed in its turn because it had not been able to avoid dynastic dissensions. Nevertheless, this brilliant period of Burmese hegemony in the Indo-Chinese peninsula scarcely extended beyond the end of the sixteenth century. Bureng-Naung was to die in 1581 after a most

149: Reinach--5a G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Fig. 5 /p. 9/ Imperial seal of Annam belonging to the king of Luang-Prabang.

149: Reinach--124 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

Although less pure than in Cambodia, the bonzes' morals in Laos are generally fairly good. They are, moreover, greatly loved, highly regarded and fondly cherished. When there is a celebration or a great feast in a family, part of the choicest dishes is always reserved for the bonzes.

On the next to the last day of every phase of the moon, the bonzes must make public confession of their faults and be prepared, should the need arise, to undergo the punishments which the code stipulates.

Bonzeries are schools and at the same time workshops where all trades are taught. All knowledge is concentrated in them, as our knowledge was during the Middle Ages in monasteries.

Together with the pagodas, they are also spots of inviolable asylum in accordance with certain rights, and hostelries where travelers are lodged and fed with the produce of the bonzes' alms-seeking.

Newly ordained bonzes must stay in the pagoda at least three months, and may quit their habit at the end of this period. If a bonze desires to return to the pagoda after he has reentered lay life, his reassumption of the habit gives rise to the same formalities and ceremonies as the first time. It is a new ordination.

The liturgical litanies of the Buddhist religion, which the bonzes psalmodize, may not be translated into Laotian. The bonzes and the [165] [Illustration] [166] [Blank page] [167] Laotian faithful, as well as the cantors and the French adepts, chant prayers whose meaning they do not understand (1).

(1) In reality the Laotian, Lu and Youn bonzes form a sort of caste as the Druids used to in Gaul. More particularly, they are the ministers of worship, the repositories of moral authority, of scientific traditions, of secrets and of artistic and industrial methods. They transmit by word of mouth the precepts of Buddhist dogma, which were long ago explained by those who introduced the religion into the land. But the writings in "Pali" which contained these, although they can still be read mechanically by a few scholars, are no longer understood. Thence arises the necessity of handing down their meaning by word alone. Thence also, without doubt, arises the increasingly greater attenuation of the purity and force of these principles as they

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wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists " (4).

[751]
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(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien. [113]

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Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

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When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring or eyes, or on a phase of the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was unpleasing to his "Phis," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

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Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

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In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate

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584 their mutual sentiments and decide in complete freedom on the principle of their future union.

Natural inclinations are rarely opposed by parents, and so it is primarily out of form and a sentiment of respect that a young man, after reaching an agreement with his fiancée, sends an old man to convey his proposal to the parents of the future bride.

[554] On the other hand, since Laotian customs establish the size of the dowry which young men must, depending on their social status, [192] deliver to their in-laws, girls eligible for marriage encourage only those suitors who are in a position to provide such a dowry (1).

(1) The sum varies, for the lower and middle classes, between ten and 250 francs. But in the families of notables it may go as high, counting jewelry and gifts, as 1200 or 1500 francs.

When an agreement has been reached the fiancée's parents give a feast to which relatives, friends, neighbors and bonzes are invited. The latter then set a day and hour for celebrating the marriage, taking care to choose a propitious day.

585 On the appointed day the groom, accompanied by his friends and by musicians, goes to the house of his future wife's parents, to whom he delivers the sum agreed on as his dowry as well as the clothes, jewels and various gifts which he may care to add. As a sign of homage he also gives his in-laws wax candles and flowers, which are often accompanied by various foods, brandy, tobacco, etc.

The marriage contract is immediately drawn up in the presence of a mandarin and notables of the region. The act gives the names of the bride and groom, as well as those of their parents and the witnesses and magistrates present. The sum of the dowry, the jewels and other objects delivered by the groom to his future bride and her parents are carefully listed. Then after the document is signed by the young couple the authorities affix their seal to it and it is given to the girl's parents (2).

[212] (2) When the bride or groom does not know how to write, his or her signature is replaced by a black or red thumbprint or by an outline of the joints of the index finger (generally of the left hand).

149: Reinach--147 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
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Polygamy. Although polygamy is not the rule in Laos, it is sanctioned by custom, and the only limits as to the number of wives one man may possess are the extent of his resources and his personal taste for becoming the husband of a greater or lesser number of wives.

Since infertile unions are regarded as a punishment of [194] heaven, and since physiological defects are beyond the comprehension of the Laotians, a husband who has no children has two courses between which he can choose:

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1. To repudiate his sterile wife. He must then leave her all their property gains since their marriage and half of their common property;

2. To keep this wife and take a second one.

Recourse is preferably had to the last solution in most cases. By acting thus the husband avoids making restitutions which would often be difficult for him. Moreover, his first wife often persuades him to take a second wife who will be under her orders and almost become her slave.

This is what does happen if the husband has enough money for several wives. They are all under the domination of the first, never sit at the same rank as she and may not wear jewels or clothes which are as rich and sumptuous as hers. They are, in a way, legal concubines.

These secondary wives are ranked in accordance with their date of entry into the polygamous household and are designated as the first wife, second wife, third wife, fourth wife, etc. In the house, except for the times when the husband or master keeps them with him, they are employed as servants for all the household tasks, farming, spinning cotton, weaving cloth, etc.

In the case the first wife should die, and according to the will of the husband, the second wife takes her place and the others advance one notch.

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There is also another very curious type of polygamy which is encouraged by the nomadic habits of the Laotian traveler or trader and which, "utile dulci," yields him profit, security and pleasure. Some natives are, in fact, married at several different places, often quite far from one another and generally situated at the spots where periodic markets are held.

The advantages of this type of polygamy--from the Laotian point of view, of course--are that the husband can have an associate

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595 in each center who will represent him, handle business in his absence,
485 collect at leisure the stock of trading merchandise needed for the next [195] trip, and also provide a home for him where he is sure to find a smiling face and a warm welcome in the course of his wanderings.

554 Among the nobility and the so-called princely families polygamy
595 is the rule and is almost obligatory for the sake of prestige, which demands a greater or lesser number of concubines depending on the husband's rank. It may sometimes happen, for various reasons, that there are two wives whose progeniture enjoy a higher rank and inherit the titles and duties of the father. It also happens, in this social milieu, that the first wife or wives will see that their husband is growing old, worn out and morose, and will seek to distract him during his last years by making him marry quite young girls for whom he is more of a father than a husband but who give him the illusion of rejuvenation and bring joy and gaiety into the house with the light of their youth (1).

(1) Thanks to the docile character of Laotian women in general, and also to the atavistic imprint of custom which makes them regard polygamy as an entirely natural status, peace and harmony are rarely troubled in such households. A hierarchy naturally arises among the various wives and concubines. Each of them remains in the place assigned to her by the date of her entry into the household and enjoys any special favors which may be conferred on her by their common husband without arousing any jealousy.

Quarrels between wives are so rare that when one does by chance occur the corporal punishments decreed by ancient custom are unhesitatingly applied. The situation is of such a nature as to preserve among Laotian wives a spirit of conciliation and amiability which is not the least of their charms.

832 Kissing. Punishment for amatory offenses. Like most of the
834 peoples of the Far East, the Laotians do not indulge in kissing, at least not in the European manner. They rub their noses against the skin of their children or wives and sniff more or less noisily.

Although the morals of the Laotians seem excessively free to us and their remarks, songs and gestures often border on what we would describe as obscenity, we should not conclude that the Laotians are deliberately lewd or cynical. They are instinctively careful to be

Gifts from the family serve as payment for the bonzes. When the prayers are over, flowers and wax candles are added to the gifts. The body is then raised on the shoulders of four pallbearers of good-will and taken to the cemetery, where there are a few ablutions and where the bonzes recite the last prayers before the burial. 764 792

When all is done the persons present take turns throwing branches, earth and stone into the grave, in the belief that these things will preserve the deceased from contact with wet soil and the teeth of animals. The grave, comparatively shallow, is dug two sok (.9 meter) deep for adults and a half sok (.65 meter) deep for children and adolescents. When the cavity has been filled with earth and well tamped down with the feet, the persons present withdraw and all is over forever.

No worship will be practiced for this tomb, and it will soon disappear under a thick blanket of vegetation. Relatives sometimes return, however, after a rainfall if the ground happens to have settled slightly on the very spot of the grave. They then fill up the tomb and build a sort of tumulus above it with flat stones or heavy round rocks.

The custom of throwing into running water the bodies of persons who had died as a result of certain diseases, generally of an epidemic character, used to be practiced in Laos before our arrival there. The inhabitants had no concern for the fatal consequences which such a procedure might have on public health. Since our arrival in the land an absolute prohibition has been issued against throwing any corpse into the watercourses. Nowadays the people are content merely with simulating this custom and with interring bodies after a pretended immersion. 766 744

[202] When the family of the deceased is wealthy or even well-to-do, cremation is the standard procedure. This ceremony is not performed immediately after death is pronounced, but may often be postponed for more than a month either to enable relatives to come from a distance, or to await the settlement of a pending lawsuit, or else the arrival of the fire sent by the sovereign if the deceased is a prince, an official or a man of a certain rank. Wealthy families postpone the date of cremation out of ostentation, for the interval between death and cremation is supposed to be filled with feasts, celebrations and amusements of all kinds which are put on almost continuously for the bonzes, relatives, friends, neighbors and [554] 764

764 passersby and which entail great expenditures.

The procedure in cremating bodies is practically the same throughout all of Laos, except for a few matters of detail peculiar to certain tribes and localities.

After death the body undergoes several preliminary operations, these being the ablutions, placing the funeral offering destined for the genii of the beyond in the dead person's mouth, drying the body and depositing it in the bier. The Laotian funeral offering recalls the ancient Egyptian custom which survived among the Greeks and [554] Romans under the name of obolus for Charon. In Laos this is a coin--a tical or a rupee--or a strip of silver or gold rolled into a cylinder on which the bonzes have used a sharp instrument to engrave certain sacred formulas and the word Arahang twice repeated, which in mystical language signifies worthy of honor, saint, exempt from all carnal desire, etc.

If cremation is to be postponed for any length of time the body is dessicated by means of mercury, which is introduced through the mouth so as to clean out the viscera completely, empty the intestine and prevent putrefaction. The procedure is completed by fumigating with aromatic plants and bark before the body is deposited in the bier. When the latter ceremony is over, the joints of the coffin are carefully luted with a special paste. Then until the time of cremation the casket is placed on a rather high catafalque which is covered with a roof and situated either in a [203] pagoda, in the dead person's home or in that of one of his close relatives.

There follows below the description of a funeral ceremony, all the phases of which were witnessed by the author. It will enable the reader to gain quite an exact idea of what cremation is like in Laos.

As soon as the death was made known, the bonzes from both pagodas of the Muong (1) came to the dead person's house in order to

(1) Here we refer to the Muong of Pak-Lay, capital of the province of Outhai-Thani (kingdom of Luang-Prabang). The deceased was the Tiao-Muong or head of this province, and was more than eighty years old when he died.

recite the litanies prescribed by the rites, and to see that a wall of the house was knocked down on the side of the rising sun. A bamboo staircase was built the entire width of the opening to give access to the room in which the body was to be displayed.

Tribal Tai

181 bread by their work, they have scarcely a care for the morrow.
461 Scrupulous observers of the traditions handed down to them by their ancestors, they live an utterly carefree life and instinctively dread everything foreign or unknown to them.

463 Occupations. The men busy themselves with the tasks of farming,
241 fishing and hunting. They are very industrious and skilled farmers, and can draw admirably on the soil's resources. They bring in the wate needed for irrigating their rais or mountain ricefields through ingenious
462 canals built along the sides of hills, and they also know how to capture springs, often very distant ones, for the same purpose. To decorticate paddy, they use mills driven by artificial waterfalls. The women perform the household chores, take care of the children, make and mend clothes, harvest and spin cotton, breed silkworms, unwind the cocoons and mill the silk. Theirs also is the task of supplying the home with water and with wood which they gather in the forest, as well as sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, getting in and decorticating the rice. These many tasks leave Thai women and girls little leisure, and it would thus seem only natural that they should profit by a momen of pleasure, whenever one presents itself in the midst of their multiple duties. They do, in fact, go in for fun eagerly and behave as keenly, despite their more reserved appearance, as their Laotian sisters.

361 Houses. There is no difference between Laotian villages and Thai villages, except that the latter are better kept and cleaner.
342 Thai houses are generally longer and higher than those of the
592 Laotians, by reason of the custom which decrees that the whole family-- parents, children and grandchildren--shall live under the same roof. Some Thai houses are as much as thirty meters long and from eight to ten meters wide. In rare cases one finds much larger houses which are from seventy to seventy-five meters long and twenty-five meters wide.

342 Thai houses very often have no verandas on their long sides, but always have two, one at each end, which are covered by rounded roofs
554 and serve as reception terraces or antichambers.

The houses of mandarins and notables can be distinguished from the others by the fact that the roof rafters and the trusses of the gables extend above the line of the roof and cross. These members are decorated with wooden silhouettes or scallops ending in discs which, depending on their number and arrangement, indicate the rank of the house's owner.

149: Reinach--179a G-3 (no date) 1901 AMI Indochina
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Fig. 61 /p. 244/ Mandarins of the province of Muong-Hou.
(Courtesy of M. Besson.)

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The Laotian, as we have said before, makes his powder himself. He also casts his bullets, which are usually only shapeless masses of lead or iron. In view of this fact it is not surprising, with such ammunition, that his guns do not have even a medium range. He is therefore forced to shoot from a very short distance, often less than five meters, if he wants not merely to hit his prey but to strike it in the right place so as to fell it on the spot and not risk becoming the victim of a wounded beast.

[345] European weapons tempt him because of their careful construction and long range, but if by chance he does try them they do not yield the same results in his hands as his own do, imperfect as they are. Thus he prefers his own weapons to ours, finding them better adapted to his eye and his arm.

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For several years now, however, double-barreled hunting rifles of an inferior quality and Winchester muskets of the already outdated 1878 model have been imported into Laos through Siam and Burma. The careful maintenance which such weapons require, the high price of ammunition and the difficulty of obtaining new supplies are all reasons preventing their widespread use. Thus they are, so to speak, only luxury items possessed by a few fortunate Laotians who have acquired them out of ostentation rather than for use.

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Firearms and crossbows are not the only hunting devices used in Laos. Indeed, there is no lack of ingenious instruments, some simple and some complicated, but always perfectly adapted to the particular purpose to which they are destined. They are made with perfect artistry and care, with a view towards capturing the most diverse forms of wild life, from the largest pachyderms such as the elephant down to the smallest bird. Traps, deadfalls, snares, springes, nets, birdcalls, etc. complete the Laotians' hunting equipment. All these devices are manufactured by them during the rainy season, when they are confined to their houses. They are like our peasants who profit from the long winter evenings to make all the little things which they will need during the course of the year.

Rifles and crossbows are used only in hunting the larger wild animals. The natives use special methods to capture elephants.

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This pachyderm once lived in great herds in all the parts of Laos which offered grassy plains, valleys and high plateaus, especially where certain varieties of bamboo, wild banana trees and graminaceous plants which were to its taste grew. Nowadays, because

241 Lower Laos and 1,1 inhabitant in Upper Laos), the considerable expense
311 which the establishment of a registry would involve, and the slight interest attached to such a measure in a land where our advantage lies in exercising only an indirect administration, it is impossible for me to reply in any precise fashion.

"All that I can say is that the area of cultivable land is about 80,000 square kilometers, and that it is very unevenly distributed.
[312] The southern part of the possession does offer a certain number of vast plains which are well irrigated or can be irrigated and which are admirably suited to agriculture.

"The northern part, on the other hand, is almost exclusively made up of a series of juxtaposed mountain masses in a nearly unbroken line which leaves only an insignificant place for the rare valleys and plateaus satisfying the conditions required by agriculture.

"The area of cultivated land may be estimated arbitrarily at 30,000 square kilometers, distributed as follows:

Southern Laos, 20,000 square kilometers.
Northern Laos, 10,000 square kilometers.
} Giving about 15 inhabitants per cultivated square kilometer."

In the preceding chapter we gave a list of the plants which compose the flora of Laos. We shall supplement it here by studying those which are grown as regular crops.

243 RICE. Rice, being the basic food of the Laotians, occupies first place among the country's crops.

Two varieties of rice are grown in Laos, glutinous rice or "Nep" (in Annamite) which is called "Khao-Niaou" in Laotian, and dry rice or "Khao-Tiao" which is known in trade as Cochinchina white rice.

The first is more nourishing and contains a higher percentage of starchy matter. Because of its particular qualities, it is the type most widely cultivated for food and for the manufacture of alcohol.

Dry rice or "Khao-Tiao" is also cultivated, but in smaller quantities. It is primarily used for making pastry and for food by inhabitants of certain races which do not eat glutinous rice.

[554 262] Persons of a certain standing even go so far as to eat only "Khao-Tiao" out of ostentation.

Glutinous rice is grown in plains ricefields as well as in terraced ricefields on hillsides and in "Rais" or temporary clearings in the mountains.

177 gesture, and others say that to salute the Laotian way sometimes
576 seems degrading because those whom one greets do not always return the greeting in the same manner, considering it as an homage which is their due but which does not need to be reciprocated.

The Laotian is polite, one must abide by that. The Laotian is respectful of tradition, one must abide by that even more emphatica But let us not forget that from now on all Laotians must have the sense of progress and the desire to improve themselves. Politeness must be neither a unilateral token of respect nor a mark of the humiliation of the human being.

554 To salute in the French manner the subordinate nods his head
576 after having taken off his hat if he is wearing one. If someone extends his hand to him, he shakes it. The superior is the first to hold out his hand. The woman is the first to hold her hand out to a man. To be polite one should shake hands somewhat forcefully. In order to do so one should always use one's right hand and never imitate certain Laotian peasants who, under the pretense of being acquainted with French customs, extend their hand from afar to Europeans while stretching out their left arm.

In the street.--When one meets a high personage in the street it is no longer necessary, as it used to be, to sit down in order to greet him. After having taken off one's hat one nods one's head. If one is not wearing a hat one is free to greet him either by joining one's hands together or by nodding one's head politely. If one is on a bicycle or on a horse, there is no need at all to dismount. The mere gesture of nodding one's head suffices. If one has something to say to a friend whom one meets, one should stand on the side of the street or of the pavement to conduct one's conversation. When one is on a bicycle one should dismount and should not leave one leg over the frame of the bicycle while one is chatting. If one is dealing with a colleague or an intimate friend, one may hail him using expressions like: "Sabay!" (good day), or "Pai sai ma?" (where are you coming from?): that is good tradition, which must always be preserved.

481 Laotians have the habit of walking in Indian file. This habit
576 should be abandoned because it is no longer good form. It will be well to practice the European custom of walking abreast of one another except in cases when this is a hindrance or on a path. When there are two people walking together, /972/ the superior places

[76] LAOTIAN WRITING AND LANGUAGE

212 Laotian writing has an alphabet. It is written from left to right. The Laotian characters derive from the Thai writing created by King Rama Kamheng of Sukhodya in A. D. 1283. But this Thai writing is merely a substitute for the cursive form of the writing of inscriptions in ancient Khmer of Cambodia. This explains the striking similarities of Laotian and Khmer letters.

The tham characters are used especially in religious texts, but also sometimes in novels.

Two other writings close to the Laotian alphabet are the lu, whose use is localized in the extreme north, and the yuon, used at Xieng Mai and in the bordering provinces.

213 The Laotian manuscripts written on four lines are engraved with a pointed instrument on palm leaves of varying length pierced with two holes, at one third and at two thirds of their length. The cord which is to hold them together must only be put through the hole on the left side. A bundle of about twenty leaves forms a phuk (pronounced p'ouk). These phuk are grouped in bundles (mat) which are wrapped up in a piece of cloth or else they are put in a pile held at the top and bottom by two wooden boards, and pierced from right to left with a double series of holes through which a thin cord is passed. The two extremities are tied in a knot used to carry this mass.

[77] The Laotian Language

194 It is a tonal language. It possesses three series of letters, medium, high and low.

193 Morphology. The purely Laotian words rarely have more than two syllables. There is no article. The words are invariable. There is no gender, nor number, only generic terms used to define men, animals, vegetables, etc. The generic categories are numerous. There is one used for leaves and all that is flat, another for round and elongated objects, such as trees and columns, etc., in all there are about twenty.

Like the other words, the verb is invariable. Verbal time is unknown, but there are auxiliaries indicating a completed action. Personal pronouns differ according to whether the person addressed is an inferior, an equal or a superior.

[554]

Syntax. Laotian construction is direct: subject, verb, object. The determinant follows the determined. A question is made without

inverting the order of words. The negation bo is added. Is the gentleman home? is translated Tan you ban bo? Sometimes a single word contains a whole phrase:

mi = there are.
dai = it is possible.

**Vocabulary.** In addition to the pronunciation of sounds, one of the difficulties of the Laotian language is the distinction between noble language and popular language. The language is different when one addresses the bonzes, the high dignitaries, the king. There is a very rich concrete and abstract Laotian vocabulary which unfortunately is tending to go out of use. We have found in manuscripts Laotian words translating textually [78] abstract Pali words, but they have been gradually forgotten. The Laotians no longer read enough of their original texts. Cheap Siamese literature has invaded the country making the people abandon their own language.

One of the urgent tasks is to bring back the old Laotian texts into honor and to spread them abroad again among the public.

[79] LITERATURE AND MUSIC

In addition to the canonical religious literature already discussed, Laos possesses an important literary treasury. But as in Cambodia, Siam and Burma, this literature is anonymous. We are in the presence of epic texts of Indian origin, of legendary traditions, of apologues, of legal, moral or comic tales. There exist also novels, but as in French "romances" of the Middle Ages, they are by unknown authors. There is no equivalent in Laos of a Kalidasa or of a Li T'ai-po. No philosopher or dramatic author is known.

If the name of a French writer were mentioned whose manner is closest to that of Laotian authors, it would be that of Charles Perrault, and this in a word characterizes the type of Laotian literature. It excels in wonderful tales.

**Literature of Indian Inspiration.**

In addition to the Jatakas, Laos possesses at least two great texts of Indian origin. This is said under reservation of further discoveries, for in spite of the important work of Louis Finot, "Recherches sur la littérature laotienne," we are still far from knowing all the treasures of the Laos pagodas.

a) **The Pancatantra.** The first text is a collection of tales copied from the famous Indian Pancatantra. In the Middle Ages